

As a nation, we must act to protect this most fundamental, inalienable right for all people.

At his recent confirmation hearing, Governor Brownback pledged to “stand for liberty and stand with the persecuted [and] to promote respect for religious freedom by all governments and peoples.” I believe he will fulfill this pledge, and I thank him for his willingness to serve our country as Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. YOUNG). Without objection, it is so ordered.

## EXECUTIVE SESSION

### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session for the consideration of the following nomination: Executive Calendar No. 474.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Jonathan H. Pittman, of the District of Columbia, to be an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia for the term of fifteen years.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nomination.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nomination with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements relating to the nomination be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Is there further debate?

If not, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Pittman nomination?

The nomination was confirmed.

## LEGISLATIVE SESSION

### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

### VOTE EXPLANATION

• Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for the confirmation vote on the nomination of R.D. James to be an Assistant Secretary of the Army.

On vote No. 24, had I been present, I would have voted yea on confirmation of the James nomination.●

(At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

### VOTE EXPLANATION

• Mrs. McCASKILL. Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for vote No. 24 on January 25, 2018, on the confirmation of Executive Calendar No. 552, R.D. James to be an Assistant Secretary of the Army, Army Corps of Engineers. Had I been present, I would have voted yea.●

### 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE YELLOW RIBBON REINTEGRATION PROGRAM

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program. The National Defense Authorization Act of 2008 established the Department of Defense Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program to assist National Guard and Reserve servicemembers as they transition between their civilian and military roles and back again. The program ensures the readiness of Reserve Component members, their families, and communities before, during, and after deployment.

National Guard and Reserve servicemembers are the backbone of our Nation's military, comprising nearly half of our total force. We have relied on them to support combat missions abroad, and we will continue to rely on them. Nearly 1 million guardsmen and reservists have deployed since September 11, 2001, with nearly 35,000 currently mobilized.

Not only do National Guard and Reserve servicemembers support combat operations, security, and humanitarian missions around the world, they also ensure our safety when unforeseen disasters and emergencies occur. Just this past year, Reserve Component members have responded to Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria, providing relief and emergency services to hundreds of thousands of Americans. Through their compassion, professionalism, and courage, they protect our way of life, not just abroad, but also here at home.

In establishing the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program, Congress recognized that National Guard and Reserve servicemembers face challenges throughout the deployment cycle that

are uniquely different than those confronting their Active-Duty counterparts. Most notably, Reserve Component members often live far from military installations and other members of their units, decreasing their opportunities for support during each stage of deployment.

The Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program bridges this gap by connecting National Guard and Reserve servicemembers and their families with resources where they live and provides a support network to aide their unique challenges. Through the program, Reserve Component members and their families gain access to relevant information and resources, including family and marriage counseling, financial planning and education, small business planning, legal benefits, healthcare information, employment training opportunities, and veterans benefits education.

I had the distinct pleasure of working with Congressman John Kline and Senators Norm Coleman, Saxby Chambliss, and JOHNNY ISAKSON in introducing the legislation that created the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program in 2008. I am pleased to say the Minnesota National Guard's program, Beyond the Yellow Ribbon, sought to improve how Minnesota's servicemembers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan experienced reintegration and became the model for the national program we are recognizing today.

Since its launch, the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program's pre, during, and postdeployment events have supported more than 1.5 million servicemembers and their families. These 10 years have demonstrated the necessity of the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program's mission in maintaining the readiness of National Guard and Reserve servicemembers, their families, and their communities.

I am sure the entire Senate will join with me in congratulating the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program on the successes that have brought it to its 10th anniversary and supporting its continued success moving forward.

### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

#### TRIBUTE TO DANIELLE HIGHLEY AND JAXON AGEE

• Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, this week I have the honor of recognizing two of Montana's 24,000 children who benefit from the Children's Health Insurance Program, better known as CHIP. Jaxon Agee of Helena was diagnosed with Leigh syndrome as a baby. Access to a pediatrician is absolutely critical for Jaxon. Despite having a team of medical professionals who work to ensure he remains healthy, he has had to be flown from Helena to Community Medical Center's pediatric intensive care unit in Missoula several times. Jaxon's family is committed to caring for their son no matter what,